



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
P.O. Box 3621  
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

October 6, 2003

In reply refer to: KEC-4

**To: People Interested in the Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) Rehabilitation Project (Project No. 1996-034-01)**

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund improvements to the Methow Valley Irrigation District's irrigation system under the MVID Rehabilitation Project. The project now proposed for funding includes fish screen replacements along the MVID East and West Diversion canals. This notification briefly explains the approach BPA will take in making a final decision regarding funding for the fish screen replacements

### **Background**

In 1997, BPA completed an environmental assessment (EA), which analyzed a range of alternatives for rehabilitation of the MVID's irrigation system, and issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for its preferred alternative. The alternatives in the 1997 EA overlap considerably with the currently proposed MVID action of fish screen replacements. However, since the EA and FONSI were completed, a number of circumstances have changed relative to the project have changed. Some of the more noteworthy developments include:

- MVID did not accept the 1997 EA preferred alternative - conversion to wells and piped irrigation.
- The National Marine Fisheries Service (now NOAA Fisheries) sued MVID to prevent violations of the Endangered Species Act. In 2002, NOAA Fisheries and MVID entered into a two-option consent decree to settle their litigation. The options were pumped diversions or replacement screens on MVID's diversions. MVID rejected the first options and elected to pursue the replacement screen option.
- In April 2002, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) issued an Administrative Order requiring MVID to limit its diversion of water from the Twisp and Methow rivers to a combined maximum instantaneous rate of 53 cubic feet per second (cfs), a substantial reduction from MVID's claimed diversion rights of 102.4 cfs.
- In August 2003, the State of Washington Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB) found that Ecology's order reducing MVID's diversions to 53 cfs did not "meaningfully address the significant inefficiencies in MVID's conveyance system", and ordered Ecology to re-examine the MVID irrigation system with the goal of issuing a supplemental order to adequately address excessive conveyance losses.

- On August 15, 2003, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council recommended that BPA provide funding for screening the MVID diversions.
- Ecology is currently performing a wastewater analysis and will probably issue a new order in several months.

### **Goals**

The goals of this fish screen replacement proposal are to prevent injury and mortality of fry and fingerling salmonids, support the restoration of fish populations in the Twisp and Methow rivers, comply with appropriate Federal and state standards and criteria for fish protection, and meet the terms of the NOAA Fisheries/MVID consent decree.

### **Proposal**

BPA's 1997 EA addressed the replacement of MVID instream diversions and open canals with groundwater wells and pressurized pipe as the preferred alternative. The EA also considered a partial upgrade alternative, dissolution of the MVID, and a no action alternative. The scope of the current proposed action consists of replacing outdated fish screens and their infrastructures near the MVID diversions on the Methow and Twisp rivers (East and West canals). The proposed new screens would comply with current biological protection criteria to reduce mortality and injury to both anadromous and resident salmonids. In anticipation of Ecology's revised Administrative Order, the fish screen replacement will be designed to accommodate a range of diversion flows.

### **Environmental Analysis**

According to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as a Federal agency BPA must study the environmental impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of a proposed project before we can fund a project. Due to changed circumstances, and to address the most recent proposal, BPA plans to supplement the 1997 EA and either issue another Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the fish screen proposal, or proceed with an environmental impact statement if it is determined that significant impacts may occur. The supplemental EA will address the new alternative, consider any new and pertinent information, and offer an opportunity for additional public review. It will include an analysis of potential impacts to floodplains and wetlands. During preparation of the Supplemental EA we will also initiate the environmental permitting processes for in-stream work and Endangered Species.

BPA expects to release a draft supplemental EA by December 2003 for a 3-week comment period. If an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and a FONSI can be issued, construction could likely begin in the spring 2004.

**For More Information**

If you would like to receive a copy of the draft supplemental EA when it becomes available, please fill out and return the enclosed card. In the meantime, if you have questions or need more information, please send them to me electronically at: [cjkeller@bpa.gov](mailto:cjkeller@bpa.gov) The BPA project manager is Ms. Linda Hermeston at: [llhermeston@bpa.gov](mailto:llhermeston@bpa.gov) You can also reach us at BPA's Communications Office, KAC-7, P.O. Box 12999, Portland, OR 97212 or at 1-800-622-4519 or at [comment@bpa.gov](mailto:comment@bpa.gov). When calling or writing, please reference the MVID Rehabilitation Project

Sincerely,

/s/ Carl J. Keller 10/6/03

Carl J. Keller  
Project Environmental Lead  
Environmental Policy and Strategic Planning

Enclosure  
Reply Card